



## Towards the Achievement of Education Policies Objectives: The Challenges and the Way Forward in Nigeria's Case

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Nigeria, even though the educational system is blessed with many policies, in what appears to be a paradox, there is less to show for it in terms of development. Many policies in the educational system have not been seeing the light of the day because of some challenges, such as the: inadequate funding; inadequate skilled personnel; instability of government; increase in population and enrolment; corruption, inadequate and inaccurate data and information; interference of politics; disparity of implementation; ignorance of the citizens; ethnicity; negative attitudes of the citizens; which form the focus of this paper. In the quest to achieve this feat, the paper gathered literature and data to buttress the claims made in support of the theme while recommending measures for improvement of the situation, such as the: adequate funding of educational system; recruitment and regular training of Education Officers; recruitment and training of teachers; combating corruption; and a host of others.

KEYWORDS: Achievement, education, policy, education policy, objective, challenge, way forward, Nigeria

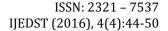
## INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the need to streamline the educational system, to ensure uniformity of standard and purpose, propelled government to evolve education policies. At the onset (i.e. during the period when Christian missionaries were in control of education in Nigeria), there was no universal policy (ies) to control the system. Reports [1, 2] indicate that each mission then formulated policies guide/control schools within its purview. When the colonial Government came on board, the need to have unified policies for the educational system, in view of the various challenges it was facing, became imperative. Different sets of ordinances were formulated and implemented, to improve the state of education. As at the time when education under the tutelage of the regional governments (i.e. West, East, and North), policies to control education were formulated by the regions. One thing that was spectacular then was the non-uniformity in policies across the regions which had serious implications on the quality of education at the different regions. Effort to streamline and tackle these loopholes, led to the formulation of the National Policy on Education in 1977, which serves as the foundation of National Policy on the educational system since then.

## **EDUCATION CONCEPT**

The word 'education' takes its root from the Greek 'educare' which means 'knowledge'. Knowledge according connotes to [3] 'understanding' or 'familiarity' gained experience'. In an attempt to make its meaning clearer to non-professionals, several definitions have been given to it by authors such as:

- The instructional programme designed to prepare an individual, through acquisition of knowledge, skills, to be accommodated and contributed positively to the development of himself, environment and society [4];
- -. the process whereby persons intentionally guide the development of persons [5];
- the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community [6];
- the social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons that submitted to it, certain skills and attitudes that are judged to be useful and desirable in the society
   [7];
- the process by which society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions deliberately transmit its cultural heritage from one generation to another [8];
- the deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes and values, skills and sensibilities and any learning that results from the effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended [9]; and
- the systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture, through formal and informal training of people in the society. [10].
  - In spite of the different definitions of education in litterature, it is a fact that the various definitions, certain facts can be deduced from these: Education
- has to do with man in all aspects of his





being (i.e. physical, mental, spiritual and emotional;

- prepares one for happy and useful living in the society;
- involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values by individual;
- involves the transmission of societal cultural heritage from one generation to another
- is concerned with man with the intention of developing or improving his condition.

# STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Education can be informal, non-formal and formal in nature. The informal education is organized on individual, family or community level and does not involve curriculum, formal teaching and learning [11]. Non-formal education consists of functional literacy, remedial and continuing education outside the formal school system. It is the out- of- school education with no defined age group, rules and regulations, syllabus, certified public examination and regular certificate [11]. Formal education is the most organized form of education which is acquired in schools/educational institutions, organized into primary, secondary and tertiary levels. While the primary education is meant for children of the age of between six and eleven years, secondary education is a continuation of primary education which is meant for a child of the age of twelve (12) vears and divided into three years of Junior Secondary (JS) and three years of Senior Secondary (SS) education. Tertiary education is the climax of formal education which is aimed at enriching the knowledge, skills, traits, as well as the values of a child beyond the level attained at the secondary level. Such education in Nigeria's context can be acquired in universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education, school of nursing, school of health technology, school of midwifery, and others of higher status than the secondary [12].

In Nigeria, education is expected to:

- -. Inculcate national consciousness and national unity;
- inculcate the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of individual and the Nigerian society
- train the mind in the understanding the world around.
- enable a child acquires appropriate skills, abilities, and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment to live and contribute to the development of the society [12].

## POLICY AND EDUCATION POLICY CONCEPTS

The concept 'policy' has different descriptions in literature. To an individual, it reflects the decision which goes a long way in directing his/her daily activities and makes him/her to be unique not only among the peers but in the society in which he/she lives. To an organization, it is a collective decision which emanates from management and which no single member can easily change except through the decision of management. [13] views it as a principle or rule that guide decisions to achieve rational outcome(s). According to [14], it as a plan of action, statement of ideas adopted government or political party etc. [15] considers it as that which is driven by ideas grounded in full knowledge of the environment and what government wants to do. In the light of the definitions, policy can be further described as the statement that provides road-map for actions tailored towards meeting specific goals and serve as guide to the action or decision of people, as well as part of the means of achieving goals in an organization. In spite of the different definitions of policy, it is a fact that policies share some characteristics. They:

- emanate from decisions;
- are adopted and implemented;
- can be violated; and
- can be evaluated, revised and rescinded

Policies that relate to the educational system are regarded as 'education policies'. [16] see these as the definite courses of action, proposed by government in power or an executive authority and adopted as expedient to the issues and problems of education. According to [17], they are comprehensive, progressive, and negotiated document of a nation's educational intention, formulated through a political process and rooted in a nation's culture, ideology and socio-economic system. In the opinion of [18], educational policies are those policies formulated by government on educational issues, bordering on the types and levels of education, curricula, planning, management and funding. Education policies thus provide a framework upon which the management of educational system rests.

Many activities/programmes in educational system are managed through the instrumentality of policies. They guide the educational institutions' administrators and others who are involved in daily management/administration of educational system, to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

Educational policies can be institutional/schools' based

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when they are dictated by the government and institutions' administrators, to guide the activities of pupils/students, teachers and administrators in educational institutions/schools. Such policies embrace the issues of class size, teacher-student/pupil ratio and teacher's workload, being dictated by government. Administrative policies are external schools/educational institutions. They relate to the establishment of schools, recruitment, retirement, and dismissal of teachers, among others.

Certain characteristics distinguish educational policies. According to McClellan (1971), cited in [17], thev:

- are formulated and adopted through a political process i.e. a process which acknowledges the reality and legitimacy of conflicting interests and desires among its participants;
- portray some elements of guidance for properly directed and coordinated action towards the attainment of the desired goals;
- contain information on the broad characteristics that should be reached:
- are binding guide on the occasion of those implementing it; and
- are enforceable and enforced by the society which formulates them.

#### **OF EXAMPLES PAST AND PRESENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA**

Many educational policies had been implemented in Nigeria in the past years while a lot of policies are being implemented at present, all in an attempt to improve the state of education in Nigeria. Examples of past education policies in Nigeria include the Universal Primary Education programme which was implemented in the western region in 1955, eastern region in 1957 and at the national level in 1976; the 6-3-3-4 education system in 1969; the take-over of voluntary and mission schools by Government in 1970; the introduction of National Youth Service Scheme in 1973; the Free Education Policy in the South West States, under the control of the Unity Party of Nigeria in 1979 and the Alliance for Democracy in 1999. At present, Government is implementing the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, Entrepreneurial Education in Senior Secondary School, School Based Management Committee, Pupils Feeding, Computer Based Testing for admission into tertiary institutions by Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board, just to mention few.

## CHALLENGES FACING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF **EDUCATION POLICIES OBJECTIVES IN NIGERIA**

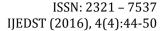
It is not a gainsaying that education policies contribute to the development of educational system,

particularly in the area of quality control. It is however one thing for a policy to be formulated, it is another for such policy to stand the test of time and achieve its goals. In Nigeria, policies have been failing to achieve the desired goals due to many challenges such as:

**Insufficient Funds:** Money is regarded as the vehicle of evangelism. A lot of funds are required during policy formulation, particularly for collection of needed data and information, and to carry out administrative duties. Implementation of policies also requires much fund. In Nigeria, funds constraint has been a bane of educational policies. Many laudable policies are terminated abruptly due to inadequate fund. In the past, Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was terminated in western and eastern regions due to lack of fund to cope with the financial implication, among other factors

Insufficient Skilled Personnel for Policies Formulation and Implementation: The process of policy formulation requires the intervention of skilled personnel, particularly those with the required training in the field of education and experience in the act. Dearth of qualified personnel for policy formulation and implementation could be observed in Nigeria. Quite unfortunate is the fact that in the Ministry of Education and parastaltals of most states, many Education Officers without the requisite skill and experience abound who are entrusted with these tasks. Many education policies thus suffer stroke because of myopic nature of those that formulated them. The issue of inadequate and low quality teachers which chracterised the educational system in Nigeria [19; 20, 21, 22] leaves much to be desired and has been undermining the quality of education being provided in educational institutions. Worthy of note is the fact that during the implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in the western region, dearth of teachers led to the recruitment of less and unqualified teachers to teach in schools [2].

Instability of Government: Instability government has been a negative feature of Nigeria since the attainment of independent status in 1960, although there has been improvement of the situation since 1999 where the foundation of the present democratic dividend we are enjoying was laid. Worried by the incessant change of leaders in the country, a former President of the defunct Union of Soviet and Socialist Republic (USSR) then lamented that bordering a plane to pay a courtesy a visit to a particular Head of State in Nigeria, he International Journal of Education, Development, Society and Technology (2016), Volume 4, Issue 4, Page(s): 44 - 50





would not be surprised if before landing at the Airport, another leader has taken over the power thus creating confusion as to who among the two leaders, the visitation should be directed to. The instability of government in the past has brought with it the frequent changes of education policies. Each government is fond of terminating the policies of its predecessor and introducing new ones so as to create self-identity and woo the gullible citizens. In the past, good educational policies, such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) collapsed in the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria due to the advent of new government which considered it inexpedient to continue its implementation, apart from the problem of inadequate and material resources implementation [2], which could have been tackled over a period of time. The take-over of schools from Christian Missionaries is another example. In 1970, when

government realized the need to take full control of the educational system and wrestle it from the tutelage of foreign missions, as well as provide secular education for the citizens, the decision to take over the mission schools from their owners was taken. Unfortunately, at present, with just three decades after this decision was taken, many states have returned schools back to the missions. While a lot of states are agitating for the return of schools back to their owners because of the voke it constitute for them. Nigeria is thus a country where policy succeeds policy. Population and Enrolment **Increase:** In Nigeria, increase in population has been prevalent. The country's population as at 1991, was estimated to be over 85 million while in 2006, it was over 140 million [23]. Increase in population has however led to upsurge in the demand for education by the citizens due to the awareness of its impacts in their lives.

Table 1: Enrolment in Public and Private Primary Schools in Nigeria: 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total	21,717,789	20,469,395	18,980,395	18,818,544	19,042,167
Enrolment(Public)					
Total	1,144,095	1,162,675	1,011,914	1,262,432	1,621,638
Enrolment(Private)					

Source: FME/UBEC, in [24]

Table 2: Enrolment in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Nigeria: 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total Enrolment	4,754,457	5,067,787	6,072,159	6,266,696	7,103,598
(Public)					
Total	624,252	3,403,800	888,800	1,551,285	1,943,595
Enrolment(Private)					

Source: FME/UBEC, in [24]

to increased enrolment, effective Due implementation of education policies has been a mirage. It is worthy of note that enrolment increase provision of without the commensurate infrastructural facilities in educational institutions. has been a bane of many education policies in Nigeria, such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme which collapsed at the western and eastern regions after few vears implementation.

**Corruption:** Corruption has been a nightmare in Nigeria. The country has unfortunately been listed as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, in terms of Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The issue of corruption now cuts across every sectors of the economy where education is having its share. Many among those involved in policies implementation are fond of demanding for

gratification, kickbacks or extra perquisites of office, for carrying out mandated policies of government [15]. According to [25], there are ghost teachers, appointment of thousands of unqualified teachers, embezzlement and mis-appropriation of education funds, among others in the education sector. Money meant for implementation of educational policies is also regarded as 'national cake' thus making every individual to wish to cut his/her shares of it. A lots of fund meant for implementation of many educational policies had found their way into private pockets. In the [26], it was reported that between 2005 and 2006, some States' Governments diverted the sum of N3.3 billion out of the N54.7 billion released for the development of primary education nationwide.

Inadequate/Incorrect Data and Information:
Data are essential for policy formulation.

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Without data, it will be impossible to formulate reliable polices. In Nigeria, it is easier for a Carmel to pass through the eye of needle that getting accurate data for policy formulation. Over the years, it has been difficult for Government to gather accurate data and information required for formulation of effective education policies, which has been leading to the problem of inadequate provision of fund, inadequate classrooms in educational institutions. equipment, personnel, and other facilities for successful implementation of education policies [17].

Policies Interference: In Nigeria, education is in concurrent legislative list which means that both the local, state, and federal governments have power to legislate on it. One of the tenets of education in concurrent legislative list is that both tiers of government have power to formulate and implement education policies, to ensure the development of the educational system. Unfortunately, as much as policy has achieved much in the education sector, issue of interference of policies, is a contending one. What can be noticed is a situation where policies of federal, state and local governments interfere during implementation process. The clash of education has thus been undermining achievement of education objectives in Nigeria.

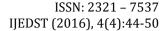
Fading of Policies over a Period of Time: It is expected .that after the formulation of educational policy it will last for specific period of time and make meaningful impact in the system. What could be noticed in Nigeria is the fading of educational policies over a period of time. Of particular interest is the 6-5-2-3 system of education, operated in the country in the past. When it was evident that such system was no longer relevant to the country's case, a better alternative system tagged '6-3-3-4 system' emerges which connotes: six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary education, as well as minimum of four years of tertiary education. The advent of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria since 1999, necessitated a change in the curriculum of education and led to the birth of '9-3-4 education policy' which connotes that a candidate needs to spend nine years at a stress for basic education (i.e. primary and junior secondary combined), three years in senior secondary and four years of tertiary education.

Influence of Politics: If there is an issue that remained inseparable from education, it is politics. [14] contended that it has continued to exert wide influence on education policies in Nigeria, from the formulation to the International Journal of Education, Development, Society and Technology (2016), Volume 4, Issue 4, Page(s): 44 - 50

implementation stage. Worthy of note is the fact that many education policies are formulated based on political sentiments without taking into cognizance the feasilibility of such policies as well as the influence of the lives of the citizens and the development of the educational system. A house that is thus built on weak foundation will collapse at the end.

Disparity in Policies' Implementation: In Nigeria, nonuniformity in the implementation of education policies could be noticed. [17] observed that the take-off period of policies vary in Nigeria. Of particular interest is the case of the present Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. Even though it was inaugurated in 1999, many States could not start its implementation until after many years. The UBE Act which gives legal backing to the implementation of the programme was signed into law in year 2007, almost a decade after its inauguration. One of the activities lined up for successful implementation of the programme by the planners is the school feeding and health programme. It was thus initially envisaged that pupils in primary schools and students in secondary schools up till junior secondary class 3 will be fed freely by government, so as to boost enrolment into schools as well as guarantee retention in schools till the completion of their studies. Unfortunately, even though twelve states came together in year 2006 to consider the idea of commencing the implementation of the policy as a pilot case, at present, only one of the States(OsunO is left with this policy. Other States had thus jettisoned it because of the huge financial implication. In addition, the inclusion of disarticulation in the implementation strategies of the programme is hinged on the belief that if effectively implemented, it will ensure proper focus on the Junior Secondary aspect of the basic education to enhance the achievement of the UBE objectives. It is also envisaged that with ISS forming separate entities, more candidates can have access to secondary education while more teachers, infrastructures, and facilities can be acquired for teaching the students. There is also the belief that if Junior Secondary Schools operate as separate entities, there will be accountability in the management of the resources of the UBE while effective monitoring of secondary schools will be achieved. Since 2004 when UBE Act became operational, many states had disarticulated their secondary schools while some had haphazardly disarticulated schools. Some are even yet to comply with the policy, in spite of its envisaged advantages. It is worthy of note that many states are re-articulating their schools thus implying a return to the status quo.

Ignorance of the Citizens: It is not in doubt that the citizens of a country need to be orientated on any policy





after its formulation, for it to be effectively implemented, more so that the policy is meant for them. Many policies had in the past crashed in Nigeria due to the level of illiteracy of the citizens. Members of the public are also not usually orientated on educational policies, implementation procedures, as well as their benefits.

Ethnicity: It is a fact that Nigeria is a country with diverse interests. [14] confirmed that there are over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups in Nigeria where each group wishes to be recognized in everything that concerns the country, education inclusive. When it is noticed that education policy is not in favour of a particular ethnic group, actions would be taken to frustrate the success of such policy. A typical case borders on the citing of educational institution. Each group always wants educational institution to be cited in its domain even without taking into cognizance, the need for effective mapping process.

**Negative Attitudes of the Citizens:** Many citizens hate change and will thus wish to do everything possible to frustrate effective implementation of a new education policy, particularly when it is against their interest. This is also not minding the influence of pressure groups that abound in the society that will condemn any educational policy without offering suggestions for its successful implementation.

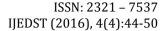
## **WAY FORWARD**

The need to achieve effectiveness in policies implementation in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, many educational policies have not been achieving their objectives in Nigeria because of a lot of challenges enumerated and discussed above. It is imperative for effort to be geared towards achieving policies effectiveness in Nigeria. To achieve this calls for concerted efforts of all the stakeholders in the education sector. In this regard:

- There should be adequate funding of education. Government should allocate more funds to the education sector, in line with the recommendation of UNESCO which is 26% of the GDP, to guarantee adequate funding of education policy formulation and implementation.
- As much as adequate and quality teachers are sine qua non to effective education policies implementation, government should take steps to recruit qualified teachers and distribute them to schools, particularly those having acute shortage while the available teachers should be sponsored to workshops and seminars and conferences to improve their competency on the job.

- Each successive government should not terminate policy (ies) of past government abruptly. Rather, existing education policy (is) should be critically examined while those found to be worthwhile should be upheld while those found to be undesirable should discard.
- Government should try as much as possible to orientate the citizens (through the print and electronic media) on any education policy in vogue so that they can know what it entails and also to change their attitudes to any policy of Government, particularly during implementation stage.
- Government should ensure that there is no interference of policies at the federal and state levels. In this case, both federal and state Government should harmonies education policies that are to be implemented.
- Adequate data and information should always be provided for education policy makers in the Ministry of Education and other Parastaltals. Government should develop a comprehensive data base for use of the education policy makers. Computer and other electronic devices should also be supplied to the Ministry of Education in charge of policies formulation.
- Government should take steps to recruit Education Officers with the required academic and experience into the various Ministries and Parastaltals who will be in charge of Policies formulation. Efforts should also be geared towards ensuring that those in charge of policies formulation and implementation are sponsored to attend workshops, seminars and conferences on policies formulation and implementation for effective discharge of their duties.
- Government should ensure that there is uniformity in the implementation of education policies. In this regard, efforts should be made to ensure that all education policies in the states across the country are streamlined, particularly in terms of implementation.
  - Government should ensure that the issue of ethnic factor is not allowed to interfere in policy formulation and implementation. Policies formulation and implementation should be devoid of any political influence either from individual or corporate including Government and should not hesitate to deal with individual that tries to undermine the process of policy formulation and

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- implementation.
- Government should take decisive steps to tackle corruption in Nigeria. The Anti-corruption crusade in the country should be strictly enforced without fair and favour. Those caught in the act should be punished to serve as deterrent to others.
- There should be regular review of policies while those found to old should be discarded.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Education policies contribute significantly to the achievement of education objectives. Efficient and effective implementation of education policies will guarantee improved state of education in Nigeria. This can however be achieved if education policies are well funded, if enough personnel are recruited for the implementation of policies, if corruption is adequately tackled in the country, particularly in the education system, and if implementation of policies is devoid of politics, among other factors. To achieve this feat calls for concerted effort of government and other education stakeholders, particularly those in charge of education policies. It is thus hopeful that effective and efficient implementation of education policies will move the education system forward from the status quo.

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